DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on April 15, 2009 has been entered.

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30, 45-48, 50-51, 53, 55, 57, 59-61, and 63-64 are presented for examination.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments filed April 15, 2009 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant submits that the Examiner agreed that the current amendment places the claims in condition for allowance. The Examiner's recollection of the interview is different. The Examiner and Applicant's representative discussed proposed amendments to the claims. Several ideas were discussed and the Examiner agreed to consider them in the next amendment; however, no formal amendment was agreed to as putting the case in condition for allowance. One idea addressed involved bringing in the details of determining whether a forecast series is available (i.e., valid or invalid) for forecasting purposes, as described on page 13 of the specification. The Examiner

agreed that the details of such a determination (at the detailed level disclosed in the specification) were not fully addressed by the current prior art rejection; however, if Applicant chose to amend these features into the claims, much of the detail from the specification should be recited and it should be done so in a manner that the recited forecast data remains functional (as opposed to non-functional descriptive material).

The current claim amendments broadly recite using user input to determine whether the forecast series is valid for forecast purposes. The level of detail from the specification (e.g., from page 13) has not been incorporated into the claims. Previously pending claims 52, 54, 56, 58, and 62 have been rolled up into the independent claims along with the clarification that the validity is determined based on user input and the generation of the particular forecast is performed after determination that the forecast series is valid for forecast purposes. However, if the forecast series is determined to be invalid, then the particular forecast does not need to be generated within the scope of the claimed invention, thereby effectively nullifying the functionality of the parameters that define attributes of the forecasts. The current claim amendment has effectively broadened the scope of the claims.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30, 45-48, 50-51, 53, 55, 57, 59-61, and 63-64 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sultan (U.S. Patent No. 6,804,657) in view of Official Notice [some of which is now admitted prior art, as specified below], and further in view of Ouimet et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,078,893).

Sultan discloses a computer system comprising:

[Claim 1] a processor (Fig. 3);

a memory, coupled to the processor, and storing instructions executable on the processor (Fig. 3), the instructions comprising:

a forecast series creation set of instructions to:

identify hierarchy data defining a hierarchy structure of an organization, including data identifying a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify a date on which to generate a forecast and a period of time over which the forecasting is to cover (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those

reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database 310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);

are employed to generate a forecast series comprising the identity of the hierarchy data, the identity of the date and the period of time, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identity of the visibility mode (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data), and

are stored together with the forecast series for use in generation of the forecast, wherein the stored forecast series is accessible for use in generation of the forecast upon request (col. 9, lines 17-22 – Generating a forecast series can involve submitting a query to a database via an Internet browser. Even if the query is only stored temporarily, it is stored long enough to process the query request which corresponds to a forecast series. This processing ultimately yields the generation of the forecast in response to the request);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation set of instructions to identify forecast data (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation set of instructions to generate the forecast using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data);

[Claim 2] wherein the hierarchy structure comprises a plurality of management levels, the forecast series creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to:

define visibility rules that specify the forecast data that are visible to each management level of the organization to be stored on the storage device, and include the visibility rules in the forecast series (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to generate a forecast for any management level of the organization, wherein each forecast that is generated is based on forecast data that are visible to the management level for which that forecast corresponds as specified by the visibility rules (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 7, lines 44-52 -- “The entered pipeline and sales information, however, should not be universally accessible by all members of the sales organization. For example, the member of the sales force occupying the Sales Manager position B11

should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him"; col. 11, lines 9-26 -- The Regional Manager may view pipeline or forecast information by rolling up the pipeline or forecast information for all those directly or indirectly reporting to him. Subsequently Division Managers and CEOs can perform the same task);

[Claim 3] wherein a forecast is generated for a manager (col. 7, lines 12-25 -- A manager can modify forecast data to be used in generation of a forecast; col. 11, lines 9-30 -- Various levels of managers can request forecast generation), and

the visibility rules include a maximum hierarchy depth search value n defining a search scope such that the forecast generated for the manager is generated from the manager's own forecast data and from forecast data corresponding to members of the organization who are defined to be both subordinate to the manager and occupy a management level in the hierarchy that is <=n levels below a management level occupied by the manager (col. 7, lines 5-64 -- "Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him. However, the Sales Manager B11 may have no reason to access either pipeline or forecast information from Sales Managers B12, B13 (even though B12 and B13 belong to the same Division as B11) or that of any other Sales Manager or any hierarchically

higher Regional manager, Division Head or CEO. To restrict access to the pipeline and/or forecast information, the assigned permission levels are used. In general, the permission levels for accessing pipeline and/or forecast information matches a sales force member's hierarchical position within the sales organization, unless such sales force member belongs to an “overlay organization” that participates in the opportunity and has permission to add information to it, but does not “own” the corresponding forecast. The maximum depth as indicated by this rule would equal the total number of levels below the member with respect to hierarchy).

Regarding claim 1, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the specified forecast parameters are used to create a forecast series that can later be accessed to generate future forecasts requiring the particular parameters of a pre-stored forecast series. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of simulation software at the time of Applicant’s invention to pre-store common scenarios as a base for further analysis. The pre-storage of common scenarios and related sets of parameters provide templates that can be conveniently called up as needed to prevent a user from having to re-type the same commonly used parameters over and over again. [In support of the Official Notice, Ouimet allows a user to select from existing, predefined demand models and market models or create new ones (Fig. 11B; col. 4, lines 40-65; col. 5, line 35 through col. 6, line 61). Since the models are defined by a set of demand-related parameters, a predefined model includes a predefined set of parameters.] Sultan allows users to perform forecasts as needed; however, Sultan’s

users commonly utilize a similar set of parameters. Therefore, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan to provide users with the option of selecting from pre-stored templates of forecast series with commonly used sets of parameters (including those specifically addressed by Sultan above) in order to conveniently reduce the amount of typing that a user has to spend re-entering the same base forecast parameter information repeatedly. Even if minor changes are made to a set of base parameters, this is an improvement over having to re-enter all parameters manually with every new forecast request.

Regarding claim 1, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid based on user input for the creation of forecasts. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art to warn a user when data is no longer valid (based on user input). For example, if a user tries to access an outdated model to perform a forecast, it would be useful for the user to be warned that the outdated model will not yield accurate forecasts. Since the Sultan-Official Notice [w/Ouimet] combination attempts to make accurate forecasts, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to further modify Sultan such that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid for the creation of forecasts based on user input and only generating the forecast after it is determined that the forecast series is valid for forecast purposes in order to warn a user if he/she is trying to access an outdated model that will not yield accurate forecasts. Furthermore, it is also noted that, if the

forecast series is determined to be invalid, then the particular forecast does not need to be generated within the scope of the claimed invention, thereby effectively nullifying the functionality of the parameters that define attributes of the forecasts.

Regarding claim 51, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the forecast series is identified by a name; however, Ouimet allows a user to select from existing, predefined demand models and market models or create new ones (Fig. 11B; col. 4, lines 40-65; col. 5, line 35 through col. 6, line 61). Since the models are defined by a set of demand-related parameters, a predefined model includes a predefined set of parameters. The market model selected to be used in combination with a particular demand model helps to customize the market model to certain situations, such as based on how one store's activity varies from that of other stores (col. 6, lines 1-61). While Ouimet does not give specific names for the predefined sets of models and parameters, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to name predefined collections of data. This facilitates quicker recognition of the scope of the stored data, thereby promoting more efficient retrieval of needed data. Since the Sultan-Official Notice [w/Ouimet] combination addresses the concept of accessing predefined forecast series (e.g., models and parameters), the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to further modify Sultan such that the forecast series is identified by name in order to facilitate quicker recognition of the scope of the stored data, thereby promoting more efficient retrieval of needed data.

Sultan discloses a computer system comprising:

[Claim 12] a processor (Fig. 3);

a memory, coupled to the processor, and storing instructions executable on the processor (Fig. 3), the instructions comprising:

a forecast series creation set of instructions comprising instructions to:

identify hierarchy data defining members of an organization and a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

determine an identity of a current forecast participant who is a member of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 6, lines 20-26 -- Access to the system is controlled; therefore, the system keeps track of who accesses, inputs, and views data);

identify members of the organization who are subordinate to the current forecast participant based on the hierarchy data (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify a date on which to generate a forecast and a period of time over which the forecast is to cover (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or

indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database 310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);

are employed to generate a forecast series comprising the identity of the hierarchy data, the identity of the current forecast participant, the identity of members of the organization who are subordinate to the current forecast participant, the identity of the date and the period of time, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identity of the visibility mode (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 6, lines 20-26; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1), and

are stored together with the forecast series for use in generation of the forecast, wherein the stored forecast series is accessible for use in generation of the forecast upon request (col. 9, lines 17-22 – Generating a forecast series can involve submitting a query to a database via an Internet browser. Even if the query is only stored temporarily, it is stored long enough to process the query request which corresponds to

a forecast series. This processing ultimately yields the generation of the forecast in response to the request);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation set of instructions comprising instructions to identify forecast data corresponding to the members of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation set of instructions comprising instructions to generate the forecast, using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data); and

a forecast creation set of instructions comprising instructions to generate forecasts for one or more members of the organization who are identified as being subordinate to the current forecast participant, using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data); and

present forecast data to the current forecast participant (col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29).

Regarding claim 12, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the specified forecast parameters are used to create a forecast series that can later be accessed to generate future forecasts requiring the particular parameters of a pre-stored forecast series. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of simulation software at the time of Applicant's invention to pre-store common scenarios as a base for further analysis. The pre-storage of common scenarios and related sets of parameters provide templates that can be conveniently called up as needed to prevent a user from having to re-type the same commonly used parameters over and over again. [In support of the Official Notice, Ouimet allows a user to select from existing, predefined demand models and market models or create new ones (Fig. 11B; col. 4, lines 40-65; col. 5, line 35 through col. 6, line 61). Since the models are defined by a set of demand-related parameters, a predefined model includes a predefined set of parameters.] Sultan allows users to perform forecasts as needed; however, Sultan's users commonly utilize a similar set of parameters. Therefore, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan to provide users with the option of selecting from pre-stored templates of forecast series with commonly used sets of parameters (including those specifically addressed by Sultan above) in order to conveniently reduce the amount of typing that a user has to spend re-entering the same base forecast parameter information repeatedly. Even if minor changes are made to a set of base parameters, this is an improvement over having to re-enter all parameters manually with every new forecast request.

Regarding claim 12, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid based on user input for the creation of forecasts. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art to warn a user when data is no longer valid (based on user input). For example, if a user tries to access an outdated model to perform a forecast, it would be useful for the user to be warned that the outdated model will not yield accurate forecasts. Since the Sultan-Official Notice [w/Ouimet] combination attempts to make accurate forecasts, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to further modify Sultan such that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid for the creation of forecasts based on user input and only generating the forecast after it is determined that the forecast series is valid for forecast purposes in order to warn a user if he/she is trying to access an outdated model that will not yield accurate forecasts. Furthermore, it is also noted that, if the forecast series is determined to be invalid, then the particular forecast does not need to be generated within the scope of the claimed invention, thereby effectively nullifying the functionality of the parameters that define attributes of the forecasts.

[Claims 45-48, 50] Claims 45-48 and 50 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-3 and 12 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 5, 6] As per claim 5, Sultan discloses that the opportunity and revenue scheduling creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to enable a

member of the organization to submit a forecast to a superior (col. 7, lines 5-37; col. 8, lines 56-30); however, Sultan does not expressly teach that the member is prevented from modifying the forecast after it has been submitted. Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of data reporting at the time of Applicant's invention to prevent modification of data once it has been formally submitted to a higher authority [now admitted prior art]. Such a practice helps to ensure the integrity of data by encouraging people to check the accuracy of data before it is officially submitted to a higher authority [now admitted prior art]. Since Sultan's managers rely on the accuracy of their forecasts in order to make global sales forecasts for a multi-national company (col. 3, lines 42-45), the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the member of the organization (submitting a forecast) is prevented from modifying the forecast after it has been submitted (to a superior) in order to help ensure the integrity of data by encouraging members to check the accuracy of data before it is officially submitted to a higher authority, thereby improving the likelihood that the aggregated forecasts will yield more accurate global sales forecasts.

Regarding claim 6, Sultan discloses that the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to present forecast data in a graphical format that enables a member to compare forecast data corresponding to related forecasts over time that are specified to be visible to that member (col. 6, lines 4-26 -- Members of the sales force may be granted access to information stored in the database. This information may be viewed via the Internet; col. 11, lines 9-12: "Regional Manager B3 may view a

pipeline and/or a forecast by rolling up (summing) the pipeline and/or forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him." The pipeline contains multiple forecasts that are viewed simultaneously. The information is graphical as depicted in Figure 3: Forecast Summary by Product).

[Claims 13, 14] Sultan discloses that the current forecast participant is a manager whose forecast is determined, at least in part, on forecasts that are submitted by one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager (col. 2, lines 1-5; col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29) and the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to generate a forecast for the manager based on a combination of forecasts submitted by said one or more selected members and any forecast that is automatically generated (col. 2, lines 1-5; col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29). Sultan does not expressly teach the step of automatically generating a forecast for any member among said one or more selected members who has yet to submit a forecast (claim 13), wherein the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to automatically calculate forecasts for said one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager and have not submitted their forecast in a recursive manner from lower levels to higher levels in the organization's hierarchy, wherein the manager occupies at least a second level of management in the organization's hierarchy (claim 14). Sultan does allow managers to alter forecast data entered by their sales people (col. 7, lines 5-43); therefore, Sultan envisions the capability of refining forecast data as needed. Additionally, Official Notice

is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of forecasting to request any missing data that is needed to complete the forecast [now admitted prior art]. This practice is utilized to retrieve any data that is needed to timely complete a forecast [now admitted prior art]. Since Sultan's global sales forecasts are dependent on forecast data received from sales people, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan to perform the step of automatically generating a forecast for any member among said one or more selected members who has yet to submit a forecast (claim 13) in order to facilitate the generation of complete and accurate global sales forecasts in a timely manner. Additionally, Sultan's higher level forecasts rely on the forecast data received from sales people who are part of the lower levels of the organization's hierarchy. Therefore, the Examiner further submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the forecast set of instructions further comprises instructions to automatically calculate forecasts for said one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager and have not submitted their forecast in a recursive manner from lower levels to higher levels in the organization's hierarchy, wherein the manager occupies at least a second level of management in the organization's hierarchy (claim 14) in order to more timely gather information in an order that reflects the order in which forecasted data sets are needed (i.e., higher level forecasts are based on data provided by members of the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy).

Sultan discloses a system comprising:

[Claim 15] a processor (Fig. 3);

a memory, coupled to the processor, and storing instructions executable on the processor (Fig. 3), the instructions comprising:

a forecast series creation set of instructions to:

identify hierarchy data defining a hierarchy structure of an organization, including data identifying a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify rules that specify forecast data that are visible to each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);

identify a date on which to generate a forecast and a period of time over which the forecast is to cover (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database

310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);

are employed to generate a forecast series comprising the identified hierarchy data, the identity of the identified rules, the identity of the date and the period of time, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identity of the visibility mode (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data), and store the forecast series for use in generation of the forecast (col. 9, lines 17-22 – Generating a forecast series can involve submitting a query to a database via an Internet browser);

are stored together with the forecast series, wherein the stored forecast series is accessible for use in generation of the forecast upon request (col. 9, lines 17-22 – Generating a forecast series can involve submitting a query to a database via an Internet browser. Even if the query is only stored temporarily, it is stored long enough to process the query request which corresponds to a forecast series. This processing ultimately yields the generation of the forecast in response to the request);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation set of instructions to send data comprising a set of interactive components via a computer network to a client, a portion of which enable forecast data corresponding to members of the organization to be entered via the client (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 4-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation set of instructions to generate a forecast for members of the organization using the forecast series, wherein each forecast is generated based on forecast data that are visible to corresponding members according to visibility rules, and send forecast data corresponding to the forecast to the client to be viewed by a user through use of the set of interactive components (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 4-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data);

[Claim 16] wherein the hierarchy structure comprises a plurality of management levels, the forecast series creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to:

define visibility rules that specify the forecast data that are visible to each management level of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

include the visibility rules in the forecast series (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to generate a forecast for any management level of the organization, wherein each forecast that is generated is based on forecast data that are visible to the management level for which that forecast corresponds as specified by the visibility rules (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 7, lines 44-52 -- "The entered pipeline and sales information, however, should not be universally accessible by all members of the sales organization. For example, the member of the sales force occupying the Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him"; col. 11, lines 9-26 -- The Regional Manager may view pipeline or forecast information by rolling up the pipeline or forecast information for all those directly or indirectly reporting to him. Subsequently Division Managers and CEOs can perform the same task);

[Claim 17] wherein a forecast is generated for a manager (col. 7, lines 12-25 -- A manager can modify forecast data to be used in generation of a forecast; col. 11, lines 9-30 -- Various levels of managers can request forecast generation), and

the visibility rules include a maximum hierarchy depth search value n defining a search scope such that the forecast generated for the manager is generated from the manager's own forecast data and from forecast data corresponding to members of the organization who are defined to be both subordinate to the manager and occupy a management level in the hierarchy that is <=n levels below a management level

occupied by the manager (col. 7, lines 5-64 -- "Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him. However, the Sales Manager B11 may have no reason to access either pipeline or forecast information from Sales Managers B12, B13 (even though B12 and B13 belong to the same Division as B11) or that of any other Sales Manager or any hierarchically higher Regional manager, Division Head or CEO. To restrict access to the pipeline and/or forecast information, the assigned permission levels are used. In general, the permission levels for access pipeline and/or forecast information matches a sales force member's hierarchical position within the sales organization, unless such sales force member belongs to an "overlay organization" that participates in the opportunity and has permission to add information to it, but does not "own" the corresponding forecast. The maximum depth as indicated by this rule would equal the total number of levels below the member with respect to hierarchy);

[Claim 21] wherein the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to send data to the client, and the interactive components are configured to present the forecast data in a graphical format that enables a member to compare forecast data corresponding to related forecasts over time that are specified to be visible to that member (col. 6, lines 4-26 -- Members of the sales force may be granted access to information stored in the database. This information may be viewed via the Internet; col. 11, lines 9-12: "Regional Manager B3 may view a pipeline and/or a

forecast by rolling up (summing) the pipeline and/or forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him." The pipeline contains multiple forecasts that are viewed simultaneously. The information is graphical as depicted in Figure 3: Forecast Summary by Product).

Regarding claim 15, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the specified forecast parameters are used to create a forecast series that can later be accessed to generate future forecasts requiring the particular parameters of a pre-stored forecast series. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of simulation software at the time of Applicant's invention to pre-store common scenarios as a base for further analysis. The pre-storage of common scenarios and related sets of parameters provide templates that can be conveniently called up as needed to prevent a user from having to re-type the same commonly used parameters over and over again. [In support of the Official Notice, Ouimet allows a user to select from existing, predefined demand models and market models or create new ones (Fig. 11B; col. 4, lines 40-65; col. 5, line 35 through col. 6, line 61). Since the models are defined by a set of demand-related parameters, a predefined model includes a predefined set of parameters.] Sultan allows users to perform forecasts as needed; however, Sultan's users commonly utilize a similar set of parameters. Therefore, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan to provide users with the option of selecting from pre-stored templates of forecast series with commonly used sets of parameters

(including those specifically addressed by Sultan above) in order to conveniently reduce the amount of typing that a user has to spend re-entering the same base forecast parameter information repeatedly. Even if minor changes are made to a set of base parameters, this is an improvement over having to re-enter all parameters manually with every new forecast request.

As per claims 15 and 21, Sultan discloses that an interface may be provided via the Internet to input and view forecast data (col. 6, lines 4-26), yet Sultan does not expressly teach that the Internet interface is programmed using HTML components. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of Internet/web page programming to utilize HTML to program Internet/web pages [now admitted prior art]. HTML is a very commonly used programming language due to its compatibility with various platforms and relative ease of programming [now admitted prior art]. Since Sultan discloses the use of an Internet-based interface, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to program Sultan's Internet-based interface using HTML since HTML is a very commonly used programming language due to its compatibility with various platforms and relative ease of programming, thereby making Sultan's interface widely accessible.

Regarding claim 15, Sultan does not explicitly disclose that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid based on user input for the creation of forecasts. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art to warn a user when data is no longer valid (based on user input). For example, if a user tries to

access an outdated model to perform a forecast, it would be useful for the user to be warned that the outdated model will not yield accurate forecasts. Since the Sultan-Official Notice [w/Ouimet] combination attempts to make accurate forecasts, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to further modify Sultan such that the forecast series can be identified as no longer valid for the creation of forecasts based on user input and only generating the forecast after it is determined that the forecast series is valid for forecast purposes in order to warn a user if he/she is trying to access an outdated model that will not yield accurate forecasts. Furthermore, it is also noted that, if the forecast series is determined to be invalid, then the particular forecast does not need to be generated within the scope of the claimed invention, thereby effectively nullifying the functionality of the parameters that define attributes of the forecasts.

[Claim 19] Claim 19 recites limitations already addressed by the rejection of claim 5 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claim 20] Sultan does not expressly teach that the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to enable one or more of the superior to which the forecast was submitted and a system administrator to unsubmit the forecast such that the member who submitted that forecast is enabled to modify the forecast. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of data reporting at the time of Applicant's invention for a superior and/or a system

administrator to return a collection of data to a data source for correction of the data [now admitted prior art]. This practice allows for efficient collaboration on data collection for data analysis and reporting purposes [now admitted prior art]. Since Sultan's global sales forecasts rely on the provision of accurate sales forecasts from individual sales people, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the forecast creation set of instructions further comprises instructions to enable one or more of the superior to which the forecast was submitted and a system administrator to unsubmit the forecast such that the member who submitted that forecast is enabled to modify the forecast in order to facilitate efficient collaboration on data collection for data analysis and reporting purposes, thereby encouraging collection of the most accurate forecast data possible.

[Claims 28-30] Claims 28-30 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, and 19-21 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claims 53, 55, 57, 59-61, 63-64] Claims 53, 55, 57, 59-61, and 63-64 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1 and 51 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Conclusion

5. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (571) 272-6733. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Kambiz Abdi can be reached on (571) 272-6702. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Susanna M. Diaz/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3692